

HIGH LIGHTS



Winter in California - 1940

Agnes Ann Dewey

An Old Adobe Publication ∴
SIERRA MADRE ARTS GUILD



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HIGH LIGHTS

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A YEAR IS BORN

by

Noureddin Addis

Weary the Old Year waits -
Weary and wasted beneath his robe of impotence.
Motionless halts the declining sun,
As - on her everlasting race -
The earth swings nearest to the Pole Star.
From circle to circle
There is night ...

From their caverns -
From their palaces,
Men look on in doubt - in awe -
Questioning men, who ask:
Shall the eternal miracle again be wrought?

Across the fire-swept zodiac -
"A god is dying" tells a soundless voice ...
The Sun-God dies; and henceforth none may live -
Frost Demons and the Lords of Ice shall rule
From chill center far beyond Pluto's orbit -
Across the edges of space ...

Three days pass -
The sun moves slowly northward ...
Omnipotence has answered men and gods;
Saying: "There is no death - no death ..."
Ever reborn is the Sun-God -
Ever reborn is the Year ...

There is life alone -
And joy to all that lives ...

MARVEL OF THE AGES

A new day opens upon the world and a new sun now rises over the eastern hills. It is a new sun that rises, though it is eons old, and it is a new world that greets it, because this day, the first day of a new year and of a new decade, everything so long familiar is seen changed or is seen anew. Today, once again, we turn our backs upon the day that is passed and upon the year that is gone, and our faces we set anew towards the day and the year that are to come. This day, too,

once again, we leave the dark and the dead now to bury their dead, and we face anew the living and the light. We turn away from Yesterday and unto Tomorrow because over Tomorrow shine forever the twin stars of hope and of promise, their soft light reflected into the eyes of Today; but over Yesterday no gleam of light is seen because Yesterday is dead. Out of dead Yesterday comes nothing that is of value to us today except the hard lessons of experience that we call history, but out of Tomorrow come our dreams to take, one by one, a shape and a reality.

Every year, the first day of the year, we all go through these same motions of readjusting ourselves and of re-orienting our directions, and we say that we have passed another mile-stone. Does Man really go forward, or is it just a treadmill of Time that is racing steadily to the rear from under his feet? As we look backwards into the dim reaches of the darkening past, we see that the waters there are thickly strewn with the jagged rocks and the reefs of experience. Whether the rocks came to us or we came to the rocks, many times we have sharply encountered them, and yet we have survived safely to the present. Many like obstacles await us nearby and far ahead; but as we take our bearings from the reefs behind us, we shall avoid more and more of them as time goes on. That is one kind of progress.

"Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels," sang the Hebrew poet, long ago, praising God for His love of Man. Judging from a close observation, however, especially with reference to certain events that loom up so big in the immediate past, many people now profess to have come to the firm conclusion that God must have made some men a great deal lower than the brutes. With the blade of sarcasm they have stabbed at the dark for others and, by accident, have hit the truth for themselves. As a matter of fact, in the beginning, God created Man lower than the ameba, and He has left him largely to himself ever since. Considering his very lowly origin, it is no wonder at all that Man is as bad as he is. The marvel is - and it is the greatest marvel of all the ages - that Man should have come up as far as he has and should be as good as he is. Therein accrues a greater glory to God that He planned so well. During the past five hundred million years, Man has come up from out of the slime of the earth; before the next five hundred million years have passed, he will have been lifted beyond the stars and will have left the angels far behind. Meager and hidden under an imper-vious bushel as they appear to be, let us never lose faith in the better instincts and in the basic and the eternal goodness of Man.

L.B.W.

CLICHE: Classic and Superclassic - or, as the highbrows would doubtless have it, 'Supra-classic.'

Some readers, of which we are one - if only by courtesy - for we are writer rather than reader, and not too much of that ... Some readers, let us repeat, and number us among them, pray, dislike the 'cliche.' And as for ourself, we hasten to say, we dislike the word 'cliche' even more than we do the avis 'cliche.'

To us it is just one more instance in which it would be less obnoxious for the user to wear one of those semi-industrial smocks bearing, instead of the usual 'Bill' or 'Doc' or 'Babe,' the legend, "I speak French - I do," or other words adding up to the same total; only maybe it would be a big falsehood if he actually did flaunt a screed like that. Perhaps his legend had better read: "I know a French word, by Heck," and so let it go at that. Though even if he can pronounce it after a fashion, we will wager our best (and only) pair of boots that he can't spell it, or vice-versa.

Trouble with literary folk these days - i.e., one of the troubles - is that they have outgrown the simple forthrightness of their predecessors, for whom, indeed, the words 'trite' or 'stereotyped' were good enough.

'Boilerplate,' too, is a "swell" word; a term that carries a meaning not unlike that of 'cliche,' although so far as we are informed it has never been dignified by the special usages of the latter. Let us speak up now, and offer in nomination as an American substitute for an alien term - which at best fits none too well - the word 'Boilerplate.'

On the other hand, let us give onomatopoeia its hearing. To speak in all solemnity, could any word or phrase other than 'boilerplate' more aptly characterize the internal distress brought on by the sight or sound of some poor phrase upon which writers as well as speakers have ganged up? The result, as everyone knows, is most likely to be an acute hyperemia of the medulla oblongata -- commonly called a pain in the neck.

Time was when we thought that "came the dawn" exemplified the very ne-plus-ultra of the subject under consideration.

Now we have "if you only knew ..."

In the past two days we have seen that phrase in print some forty or more times, and have heard it spoken in five separate motion pictures. And we wonder what has become of the custard pies of the old silent films? (Of course we really know all about that - the extra people of today get so hungry.)

It has been said that "if you only knew" is meant to evoke images. The far-away calf-seeking-for-his-mamma look in the heroine's normally dazzling orbs will not permit that meaning to escape the dumbest of the dumb. She wishes us to see what she sees; she tries with words to call forth imaginary worlds in minds where hitherto the only possible evokers have been the odors of the cuisine.

All of which is simply another example of the new tendency of morals to welter out into manners; a condition which many of the wise ones of old have said would mark the close of one era and the opening of another.

But who ever would have thought it would be like this?

N. A.

* * * * *

REMEMBER: Regular meetings of the Sierra Madre Arts Guild are held on the first Friday of each month, at 8:00 p.m.

VANITY

by Dorothy Marie Davis

Skyscrapers that seldom grow
By mirror-lakes, always know
How to bend their heads and huddle
Over every stormy puddle;

Deck themselves for parties, nights,
With chiffon mists and sequin lights;
Paint their lips a neon-smear,
Hang a penthouse from each ear.

(NEW YORK SUN)

SILVER HOUR

by

Leslie B. Wynne

From the days of antiquity, chiefly among elderly people, a popular assertion has survived, confidently reiterated from time to time by each generation, that bids us remember that "childhood is the happiest period of life." This common statement has come down to us accompanied by its rather natural corollary, quite as frequently heard, variously expressed to the effect that "the times we live in are not like the good old days," or that "the golden age is in the distant past." In other words, we have long been taught to believe that the years of greatest happiness for each of us as adult individuals, as well as for the world at large, are always behind us, always disappearing to the rear around the far bend in the road. We have already had the best of our allotment of good times, so we are told; we have already passed through the sunny uplands and over the vine-clad hills of the poetry of life, and from now on, all is plain prose and into the shadows. Fortunately, however, for our peace of mind and for the outlook of human progress, these popular sayings like many of their kind that pass for bits of venerable wisdom, are not even half-truths. They are utterly false. They are based upon faulty reasoning and upon wrong deductions. Our millennium lies in the future, not in the past.

It is easy to understand how our present worries and our troubles weigh upon us now, how the pain and the unpleasant things of today loom sharply before us like sinister mountains shutting off the sunlight, nullifying the effects of any little pleasantries or of happy moments that may come our way. They are very real to us now. But as we look back upon yesterday or upon the days of the year that is gone, the pains and the troubles that were just as real to us then, now appear like vague shadows; while the pleasant hours and those short moments of happiness that we had so little time for when they came to us, now stand forth against the background of memory outlined and illuminated as never before. The truth is that we remember what we like to remember, while we forget what we want to forget. This is a protective device of nature. We could not live if we were constantly to remember every least ache and pain, every worry and trouble that has beset us. Once pain has left us, we remember it for a while, but it is only with the greatest difficulty that we can recall just how it felt, and in a surprisingly short time it

passes entirely out of mind. Pleasures and happy hours, upon the other hand, while they may not appear of any great moment when we meet them, yet remain forever indelibly etched upon our memories to shine with a greater and an ever greater luster as time goes by. We delight in recalling them afterwards because we can still bask at will in their reflected light even though they are gone. As our thoughts run back to the years of childhood, pleasant memories of happy things and of happy hours that we have known crowd closer and always closer together like clustering stars in the drifting reaches of the Milky Way; while all the worries and the pains that once troubled us there are now dark and invisible in the depths of that distant sky. Life may be just as stark and cruel for the child as for the man, and troubles loom as large. In addition to this, the world beyond the garden gate is filled with a host of terrifying things for the child that do not exist for the man. The child is a little savage on an island more or less safe in the midst of a boundless and a dangerous sea. But with us, those "unhappy far-off things" of long ago are long forgotten, and the tragedies that broke our hearts as little children we remember now no more.

No, it is not childhood that has the best chance of being the happiest period of life, but rather old age. Our children are grown now and fending for themselves. We are freed at last from all responsibility. If ever we are to have any leisure, a little unhurried time to ourselves, we have it now. If we dream now our dreams in the mellowing sun, or if we take our ease and our siesta when it pleases us while the work of the world lies neglected, what about it? Nobody longer expects so much of us. The fever flames of the morning are spent, the fires of high noon are burned out at last, and the cool and quiet evening is before us. A little while we shall rest. A little while, and yet a little while, and we shall walk down through the garden in the cool of the day, following the sun to its sanguine setting, following after the glowing taper of the evening star that beckons to another garden and to another day.

These are the shining moments of our silver hour. This is the dawn of our millennium that was yet to come.

GUILD PROGRAM FOR JANUARY

The Guild program for Friday evening, January 3, is to be another all musical program, given under the direction of Mr. Jascha Gegna, distinguished concert violinist and soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, who with Miss Helen Swaby, pianist, and Mr. Herbert Ingraham, cellist, arranged and conducted a fine musical program for the meeting of the Guild last May. The program for January is to be equally fine a one.

Mr. Gegna, who has recently taken up his residence in Sierra Madre, is a graduate of Kiev Conservatory of Music, and is a former pupil of Leopold Auer.

THE CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT

At the last meeting of the Guild, December 6, the evening was devoted to the singing of Christmas songs, a program arranged and conducted by Blanche Wayne Marfield of Altadena, Pasadena, and Sierra Madre, and featuring her Little Junior group of Sierra Madre pupils. The children heard on this delightful musical program included Nancy Ann Welch, Jack and Dick Champlin, and George Tyree, all of Sierra Madre.

Following the Little Junior group, several numbers were sung by Jean Rowley, Viola Kilsey, Barbara Orr, and Evelyn Hoeksema. Miss Hoeksema later sang as a soprano solo, "Little Christmas Donkey," by Geraldine Farrar. Other artists who followed on the program were Dudley Buck who sang a cradle song, Frances Furstenberger, mezzo-contralto, in a Christmas number, Harley Prior, baritone, in two Christmas songs, and Francis Eakman in the "Cradle Song" by Schubert. Mr. Eakman later lead the audience in the singing of a number of Christmas carols.

Bernice Towner and Blanche Wayne Marfield acted as accompanists throughout.

OUR FLOAT

by

Noureddin Addis

"I feel quite confident," said Alfred James Dewey last Sunday morning, "that Sierra Madre's float this year will be better than ever."

"Of course," he went on with a smile, "the problem of winning a prize is not so simple. The floats in competition with ours also may be better than ever."

At the moment of writing Pasadena's Tournament of Roses parade is still in the future. Whether or not Sierra Madre is destined to go on in her prize-winning career rests yet in the laps of the gods. Perhaps, too, that does not matter so vitally; perhaps the reward lies rather in turning out a masterful piece of work - one's own, or that of a community - than in the public acclaim which accompanies competitive success.

Sierra Madre's last three floats have been winners. All have been designed by Mr. Dewey and constructed under his supervision. That of 1940, entitled "Land of the Free," consisted of a great, flowing American flag. It was accompanied by a single human figure, Miss Carol Key, of Sierra Madre, as the goddess who stands for the American ideal. Miss Key was doubly qualified for the part, first as to her style and type of beauty, then owing to the fact that she is a direct descendant of Francis Scott Key who wrote the Star Spangled Banner, in 1814, during the war with England.

This "Land of the Free" design of Mr. Dewey's has been done the high honor of being copied no less than four times in the past year. Floats modeled from it have appeared at Atlantic City, New Orleans, the Portland Rose Festival, and Lodi Grape Festival. Also a pictorial reproduction of it, and an accompanying article, have appeared in the December 1940 number of Westways magazine, in which it was offered as a representative example of superb float-building.

The Tournament of Roses awarded this float second prize in its class.

Sierra Madre's 1939 float also took second prize. It was entitled "Seeing Nellie Home." Its theme design was a horse and buggy breaking through the web of memory. Daphne Alley and Bernard Wynne rode in this old-style vehicle.

In 1938, Sierra Madre's float, "The Girl of the Golden West," received first award in its class.

Our 1941 float, "The Father of Our Country," is the design of Alfred James Dewey, as were all of the others mentioned. It presents a dignified patriotic scheme, being an equestrian statue of George Washington done in white chrysanthemums to represent marble.

The statue itself is life size, and stands on a green lawn. On the lawn back of the statue stands a colonial flag. About the lawn in front are ranged four urns with rose-bushes. The urns are in white chrysanthemums with Greek designs of blue, done in cornflowers.

Sides of the float are built up of avocado leaves, 10,000 leaves being required for the purpose. The lawn is of moss, with a path of dust-colored chrysanthemums, representing a pebble walk.

The head and hands of Washington are decorated with white chrysanthemum petals. It has taken 50,000 small white chrysanthemums to cover the statue and the lettering; 20,000 cornflowers on the flag and urns; and 5,000 poinsettia petals on the flag.

The statue and horse were modeled with plaster.

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Besides this Sierra Madre float, Mr. Dewey this year also designed a float for Ontario, which that city will enter in Tournament of Roses parade. This entry, too, was built in Sierra Madre. It is patriotic in theme, Revolutionary setting, and entitled "Washington Crossing the Delaware."

Masses of carnations are being used in decorating this float, as well as many other kinds of blossoms and foliage. Everything is under the supervision of Mr. Dewey, who has also designed and decorated a great shield which will be mounted on wheels for the Tournament.

Six live figures will accompany this entry in the parade. All these will be Chaffee Junior College students - boys.

We wish the city of Ontario and Mr. Dewey, personally, every success with this float.

MUSICAL REVIEW

by

Isobel Young

What could be jollier than to open the Christmas Season with those suave performers in the Salici show! The marionettes, dressed in gay costumes, did the most amazing stunts - smoked cigarets, laughed, played the piano - all animated by strings in the hands of that clever Salici family. The music and voices were synchronized with the movements of the puppets to perfection.

Music devotees at the Philharmonic gave a parting salute to conductor Bruno Walter after his magnificent presentation of the Gustave Mahler Symphony No. 1 in D-major. Dr. Walter conducted the entire symphony without a score, and his interpretation of this great work will be hard to surpass. Concluded on the program was Erich Korngold's "Much Ado About Nothing" suite and the Mozart Symphony in D-major.

We must not overlook the W.P.A. Symphony Orchestra which is doing such splendid work. Christmas, the distinguished Hungarian piano virtuoso, Ervin Nyiregyhazi, guest soloist of the Works Progress Symphony Orchestra in Embassy Auditorium, astounded his listeners with a brilliant rendition of the Tschaikowski Concerto in B-flat-minor. The young American, James Sample, conducted.

Artur Rodzinski will mount the podium at Philharmonic Thursday and Friday, January 9 and 10, to conduct the first symphony pair in 1941 (Weber's Overture to Oberon, "The Incredible Flutist" from Piston and Berlioz's Symphony Fantastique). He will be followed January 30 and 31 by John Barbirolli of New York.

Then, there is Heifetz on January 23 and The Don Cossacks, Sunday matinee, January 26, which you will not want to miss. On the stage, we have "The Little Foxes," starring Tallulah Bankhead, beginning January 13 at the Biltmore Theatre. It is said to be worth seeing.

Music is well said to be the speech of angels.

Carlyle - Essays. The Opera.

BOOK REVIEW

MODERN POETRY AND THE TRADITION. By Cleanth Brooks. The University of North Carolina Press. \$3.00

The modern poetry is the English and American poetry produced, for the most part, since the beginning of the present century. The tradition is that of Thomas Hobbes. Modern poetry rejects the tradition. Such is the subject matter of "Modern Poetry and the Tradition" by Cleanth Brooks, a scholarly and masterful interpretation of this new movement.

Who was Thomas Hobbes? He was the man who set the trend of English poetry for the past three hundred years. Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679) was the great English philosophical writer of the seventeenth century. After having received the usual classical education of his day, he came early under the influence of the great scientists of the time, Galileo, Kepler, Tycho Brahe, and others, adopted the scientific view-point over the metaphysical, and finally evolved a system of philosophy to be known as Scientific Rationalism. This means the formation of opinions upon any subject, relying upon reason alone, independently of authority or revelation, and in strict accordance with known scientific facts. This system was applied even to poetry. Sir W. Davenant, in the preface to his heroic poem, "Gondibert," had appealed to the critical judgement of Hobbes to bear out his theories of the epic. In 1651 Hobbes replied by publishing a letter stating his critical views on the nature and conditions of poetry, chiefly epic, but pertaining also to tragedy. In 1675 Hobbes published his translations of the "Odyssey" and the "Iliad" with a preface containing a dissertation, "Concerning the Virtues of an Heroic Poem."

These opinions of Hobbes had an influence upon English poetry quite comparable to and supplementing that of the "Poetics" of Aristotle. Everything had to conform to scientific fact, to cold scientific reasoning. It left no place in poetry for Romanticism, no place for the creations of the imagination. As an almost immediate effect, tragedy ceased to be produced and even the reputation of Shakespeare suffered; and since the death of Milton, who did not come under the influence of Hobbes, no great epic poem has appeared in English literature.

Dryden adopted Hobbes's pronouncements on poetry without reserve. Poetry was set into a strict scientific mould, thus paving the way for Pope and the classicists of the eighteenth century.

The nineteenth century, beginning with Wordsworth, saw rebellion in English literature against this strict classical school; but like all rebellions, it went too far in the opposite direction. Romanticism returned, but it returned with a stricture upon all the virtues of the classicists as well as their vices. Now comes the twentieth century and the modern poetry which is not so much a rebellion as a return to the sanity and the wholesomeness of the Elizabethans. Modern poetry, like that of the Elizabethans, would retain all that is best of the classical as well as the romantic schools. Tragedy and the epic are coming back. After all, Elizabethan poetry was the high water mark of English poetry and, in the opinion of many, was the high water mark of the world's poetry as well. It is a poetry to which it is distinctly worth while to return.

As always with a new movement of this kind, there are a number of the lesser geniuses who, tasting new freedom, throw off all restraint and go to extremes. In their search for the metaphysical, they have found John Donne, the last of the Elizabethans. Launching out from the dark metaphysical verse of Donne, they return to the sanity of Shakespeare by creating a school of insanity all their own, out-Donneing Donne, and giving their days and their nights to conducting "experiments in the unintelligible." Donne's verse is very dark but it is really not unintelligible. Even Shakespeare is at times difficult for many to understand, but that is because he is so deep. He never wrote a line of nonsense. T.S.Eliot and others of the moderns appear cloudy, but there is really no nonsense below their clouds. On the other hand, the disciples of the Insanity School, attempting to appear deep, write quite regularly a kind of verse that nobody can explain. Clarity used to be one of the marks of good verse, but no more. As a matter of fair certainty, their products are not intended to be explained. Time alone will eliminate these dark sediments and leave the waters clear.

Mr. Brooks concludes his book with a number of chapters revealing the significance to this modern movement of some of the better known poets of our day. His final chapter is a suggested outline for a new history of English poetry.

L.B.W.



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